United Nations

ST/SGB/1999/19

Secretariat

20 December 1999

Secretary-General's bulletin

Departmental focal points for women in the Secretariat*

The Secretary-General, pursuant to Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/282, entitled "Policies to achieve gender equality in the United Nations", hereby promulgates the following:

Section 1
Functions

There shall be departmental focal points for women in each department or office or regional commission, with the following functions:

(a) To support the head of department or office or regional commission in fulfilling his or her responsibilities for the achievement of gender equality in the department or office by contributing to the development of the gender action plan for the department or office and by promoting awareness of gender issues and means for the achievement of gender equality;

(b) To serve as ex officio members of all departmental panels established to advise the head of the department or office on the selection of staff for vacant posts in the Professional category and above. The responsibilities of the departmental focal points as ex officio members shall be to assist in ensuring that the special measures are applied in the evaluation and selection of candidates. In participating in the deliberations of the Panel, the departmental focal point as an ex officio member shall, in ensuring the application of the special measures, express his or her views on the respective qualifications and experience of the applicants. The views of the focal point shall be reflected in the reports of departmental panels;

(c) To serve as ex officio members of the departmental panels advising on special post allowances for staff in the Professional category and in the General Service and related categories;

(d) To assist the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women and the Focal Point for Women in the Secretariat in monitoring efforts to achieve the goal of gender equality within the department or office. One of the monitoring goals is to achieve the target of 50/50 gender distribution at the Professional level and above, both overall and at each level, in the respective departments and offices. It also includes the goal of evaluating measures taken to develop and maintain a gender-sensitive and supportive work environment and to enhance training and career development opportunities;

(e) To assist the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women in the development of policies and programmes for the achievement of gender equality in the Secretariat by contributing ideas, comments and experiences on issues affecting the status of women;

(f) To counsel and advise women staff within their department or office on issues affecting their career development or conditions of service, bringing their concerns as necessary to the attention of the head of department or office, staff of the Office of Human Resources Management or the local personnel office or Executive

* *Personnel Manual* index No. 1177.

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Office, and staff of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women;

(g) To meet with managers and staff in the department or office to discuss the implementation of the special measures, as well as means for fostering a supportive working environment, conducive to the full participation of women and men in the work of the department or office;

(h) At offices away from Headquarters, where the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women cannot be represented on the local Appointment and Promotion Committee, the departmental focal points for women shall serve as ex officio members on the local Appointment and Promotion Committee. The responsibilities of the departmental focal points as ex officio members of the local Appointment and Promotion Committees shall be the same as those set out in subparagraph (b) of the present section. The departmental focal point for women who attends the departmental panel shall not attend the local Appointment and Promotion Committee when it considers cases which have already been reviewed by the departmental focal point as an ex officio member of the departmental panel. In such cases, the alternate departmental focal point for women shall attend the local Appointment and Promotion Committee.

Section 2
Selection of departmental focal points for women

2.1 The departmental focal points for women should have a strong commitment to the goal of gender equality in the Secretariat and must be willing to undertake the functions set out in section 1 of the present bulletin.

2.2 The departmental focal points cannot be involved in any matter in which there is a conflict of interest. Therefore, staff representatives, staff of the Executive Office and staff in the immediate office of the head of the department or office shall not be eligible for selection as departmental focal points. In view of the advisory and non-voting role of the departmental focal points on the departmental panels, departmental focal points who are also voting members of the appointment and promotion bodies shall recuse themselves from meetings of the appointment and promotion bodies considering cases which have been reviewed by the focal points as ex officio members of the departmental panels.

2.3 Each department or office shall select at least one departmental focal point for women. Each departmental focal point shall have an alternate. Candidates from the Professional and higher categories and from the General Service and related categories may serve as departmental focal points. The departmental focal points shall be selected for renewable terms of two-year periods. The head of the department or office shall invite expressions of interest from staff who are willing to serve.

2.4 The departmental focal points shall be selected by the head of the department or office following staff-management consultations at the departmental or office level, in accordance with the provisions of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/274 of 28 September 1994, unless either the head of the department or the staff representatives of that department request a secret-ballot election, which shall be organized under the supervision of representatives of both the staff and the management of the department or office concerned.

Section 3
Authority

The departmental focal points shall have access to all information necessary to the discharge of their functions, as required. They shall have access to the staff of the Executive Office or local personnel office, as well as to senior management of the department or office, as required, to conduct their duties.

Section 4
Final provision

The present bulletin shall enter into force on 1 January 2000.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**
Secretary-General